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Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 03813 080940Z
ACTION EB-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EA-06 L-01 SP-02 NSC-05
INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /038 W
----------040836 081244Z /64
R 080810Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0917
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 3813

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR TH
SUBJ: BACKGROUND ON KAL-SRV CONSULTATIONS ON OVERFLIGHT

REF: SEOUL 2180

1. IN A CALL ON THE AMBASSADOR, LOUIS SAUBOLLE, THE REGIONAL BANK OF AMERICAN REP STATIONED IN HONG KONG, STATED HE HAD NEGOTIATED PERMISSION FOR KAL TO OVERFLY HO CHI MINH CITY AS PART OF HIS NEGOTIATING USE OF AMBER-ONE ON BEHALF OF PANAM IN HANOI IN MARCH. HE FURTHER STATED THAT HE HAD FLOWN KAL THAT ROUTE, SAVING ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES. (KAL CONFIRMS THAT THEY ARE USING THE ROUTE FOR REGULAR FLIGHTS BUT STAY OVER THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ON CHARTER AND EXTRA FLIGHTS. THEY INDICATED THE SRV HAS ASKED THAT THESE FACTS BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.) HE SAID HE HAD TRIED TO GET AMBER-ONE FOR KAL BUT THAT APPARENTLY WOULD BE TOO SENSITIVE FOR THE SRV TO HANDLE WHEN THE NORTH KOREANS GOT WIND OF IT, AS THEY EVEN-TUALLY WOULD.

2. IN A LONG EXPLANATION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, SAUBOLLE COMMENTED THAT THE FIRST SITE WAS TO HAVE BEEN VIENTIANE,
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BUT THE VIETNAMESE HAD NOT APPEARED. THAT AND THE OFF-AGAIN-ON-AGAIN DATE FOR HANOI DISCUSSIONS, HE THOUGHT, REFLECTED DIRECTOR OF CIVIL AVIATION PHUNG THE THAI'S TRYING TO ACT ON HIS OWN AUTHORITY WITHOUT APPROVAL FROM THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE SRV. SAUBOLLE IDENTIFIED THE DIRECTOR AS A FORMER BODYGUARD OF HO CHI MINH IN THEIR JUNGLE DAYS WHO HAD SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN ADOPTED BY HO.

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BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSENESS TO HO, THE DIRECTOR HAD APPARENTLY BEEN ABLE TO PRACTICE AN UNUSUALLY FREE-WHEELING STYLE.

3. SAUBOLLE OBSERVED THAT SRV WAS STILL SUFFERING FROM SEVERE DROUGHT AND A SHORTAGE OF RICE. HE THOUGHT THAT A GIFT OF RICE FROM SOUTH KOREA MIGHT BE ACCEPTED AND MIGHT PROVE HELPFUL ON BILATERAL ISSUES SUCH AS RELEASE OF THE SOUTH KOREANS STILL HELD BY THE SRV AND ON EVENTUAL ACCESS TO AMBER-ONE, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE LATTER COULD BE RAISED WITH THE SRV AT THIS TIME.
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